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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on open-ended group interviews with 11 graduate students of color who had tried and rejected other occupations (such as journalism, marketing, nutrition, social work, youth counseling, secretarial work, waitressing, fashion merchandising, theater, medical claims examiner, and public relations) for teaching. The study examined: how social contextual influences, past and present, affected these career changes; and what can be learned about ways to improve the teacher education experience. Subjects contributed perspectives on what prompted their decision to change occupations. Results suggest that these individuals: (1) do not equate self-advancement with abandoning the community but rather acquiring the resources to "give back" some of what was learned there and elsewhere; (2) exemplify commitment to education that serves broad social as well as personal aims; (3) view themselves as change agents and advocates for social justice; and (4) are dedicated to enlarging the circle of those who matter to them, beyond their immediate families and beyond the challenges of a single classroom, school, or neighborhood. (LL)

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"Stronger in Their Presence:" Being and Becoming a Teacher of Color

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"Stronger in their Presence:" Being and Becoming a Teacher of Color

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"There is no greater insight into the future than recognizing when we save our children, we save ourselves"
Margaret Mead (Geiger, K. Education Week, 1991)

At a time when minority school enrollment in some states exceeds 50%, the striking decline in numbers of teachers of color bodes ill for our children and our society (Baratz, 1986). In our most populous cities, this disparity is even more dramatic. According to a recent report, 80 per cent of New York City's elementary and secondary public school students but only 30% of the teachers are now from communities of color (New York Times, 1990).

Disputing widely held claims about a generalized national teacher shortage, one researcher points out, "There's no crisis in the suburban schools. The real crisis in education is in urban America" (Yarger, New York Times, 1988) A similar assessment is offered by Darling-Hammond (New York Times, 1988) who observes succinctly: "People who grew up in urban areas will be most interested in teaching in urban schools." Given these challenges, it is urgent that we redouble efforts to attract, retain and hear from educators whose faces and voices now represent more promising futures for a new generation of urban children.

Where shall we find more teachers of color? Efforts to reach and expand the traditional pool of potential teachers have focused primarily on recruitment at the secondary and post-secondary levels, with emphasis on encouraging community college students to complete four-year degree programs (Baratz, 1986). Less attention has been directed toward reaching and learning from college graduates who have tried and rejected other occupations for teaching, although their numbers are apparently on the rise (O'Toole, 1987). This paper

is based on open-ended group interviews with 11 graduate students of color whose prior occupations included the following: journalism, marketing, nutrition, social work, youth counseling, secretarial work, waitressing, fashion merchandising, theater, medical claims examiner, public relations. We believe their efforts to find self-fulfillment in service to the community offers inspiration for others and we dedicate this paper to them.

The authors are faculty members at a graduate school of education where they currently co-teach a course in the anthropology of education. We undertook this study to learn more about why people of color are choosing to teach after trying other occupations, what salient social contextual influences - past and present - are affecting their career change and what those findings suggest about ways to improve the teacher education experience for these teachers of color and others who come after them.

We wish to note, in addition, that as teacher educators who bring the perspectives of anthropology of education (Levine) and social foundations (Toppin) to our research and practice, we share a central concern about creating and maintaining learning environments conducive to success for a wider range of students. Mindful of Delpit's (1988) critique of teacher education programs which tend to reinforce dominant culture values and thus marginalize or silence students who do not share those preconceptions and practices, we listened for ways in which participation in our own program was perceived as satisfying and/or problematic by the teachers of color. One of the authors has also co-conducted an earlier qualitative study (Crow, Levine and Nager, 1990) with predominantly white middle class women leaving other occupations for teaching. The present study reveals, as did the earlier study, a strong emphasis on "internal aspects of career change...career decisions that emphasized family and self interests rather than organizationally determined career routes" (Crow, Levine and Nager, 1990). We note an important difference, however, between the two groups of career-changers studied. For the teachers of color, as will be seen below, notions of self-fulfillment and family well-being were more broadly construed as interrelated with 'give back' and service to the community.

Background and Methodology for the Study

In 1989 and 1990 our institution received two substantial grants from a major foundation to increase the numbers of teachers of color certified to teach in public school classrooms. This funding, designed to support 80% of recipients' tuition costs, has enabled our institution to boost the number of graduate students of color from 19% to 31% since 1988-89. A central stipulation of the grants was that recipients would agree to teach in public school classrooms for at least three years following completion of a masters degree program at the College. (Bank Street Report to the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, 1991).

Announcements of available scholarships for people of color currently working in some capacity for the NYC Board of Education were placed in the teachers' union bulletin, widely circulated in and around a variety of settings in the New York metropolitan area. An ad hoc admissions committee of administrators and faculty spent the month of August 1989 selecting candidates who could begin in September. A support committee of four faculty members, including the co-authors of this paper, was established at the College to provide additional assistance as needed to the new group of graduate students entering the institution.

Ranging in age from 24 to 47, the 20 members of this new group of graduate students included fifteen African-Americans, one Native American, one West Indian, one Latino, one Filipino and one Chinese-American. All but three were women. All of these students of color accepted into the College's teacher education programs over a two-year period from 1989-1991 agreed to participate in group interviews and to have their stories receive wider dissemination. Eleven have already done so and three audiotaped group interviews were conducted during November 1991. The remaining nine have consented to be interviewed at a future date, citing "overextended" family and career commitments as explanation for having to reschedule their participation.

In November 1991, one of the authors conducted one 2-hour group interview and the other conducted two of the same length. Following the tenets of ethnographic interviewing, we did not develop a formal protocol for use in those interviews but guided each session so as to enable each informant to contribute her/his perspective on each of the following two themes: 1)What prompted your decision to change occupations to teaching? and 2)What has helped and/or hindered you in pursuing this goal? Each of us subsequently transcribed all audiotaped data and contextual notes collected during the sessions we conducted. Transcriptions were then distributed to the participating students for feedback on accuracy of the data collected (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

Fieldnotes taken during our first research meeting (9/26/91) included the following entry:

> We've decided to analyze interview data from the sessions we conduct, prepare (for each other) written statements on salient themes, disconfirming evdience, questions, etc. - then come together to compare findings. This approach should further the interpretive process in a way that offers a check on premature conclusions and challenges each of us to support our claims with data.

We had considered requesting access to and using an additional source of data - information contained in each student's admissions folder. We decided, however, that the dynamic, "negotiation of meanings" (Bruner, 1991) that group interviews made possible offered a sufficiently rich source for analysis of themes and variations on entering the teaching profession.

We undertook two formal stages of analysis prior to co-constructing the ethnographic narrative and a third as we co-authored this text. The first, conducted separately by each researcher on the data she had collected, occurred before sharing our transcripts and included production of separate written accounts of salient themes each researcher had identified. We then exchanged transcripts and later met jointly to consider both the corpus of data and our preliminary interpretations. This second, collaborative stage allowed us to compare findings, to discern differences as well as patterns in our data and

preliminary analysis. Constructing this co-authored narrative involved reflection on and refinement of several drafts - thus constituting a third stage of analysis. As promised, all participating students have received and checked the transcripts for accurate representation of the data collected and auditotaped via group interviews.

Orientation for the Study

In conducting this research, our primary goal was to learn from the perspective of our informants how they defined and situated the meanings of this career change to teaching. We made the assumption, and it was borne out by our findings, that these teachers of color would have different as well as congruent stories to discuss and share. In addition, we believed it crucial not to obscure or conflate those differences in our effort to discern patterns. As teacher educators, we saw an opportunity to examine and improve our own practice by recognizing and drawing on the "funds of knowledge" (Moll and Greenberg, 1988) these graduate students were sharing with us. We consider this approach consistent with Wentworth's (1980) notion of "socialization-as-interaction," his view that novices should be encouraged to help shape the context into which they are being socialized.

Connecting Social and Personal Meanings of Career Change

As the data will indicate, all of these teachers view themselves as actors in particular sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts, as people who expect to affect and be affected by the ideas and practices of many others. Their historical narratives convey a sense of "mutual belongingness" (Ricoeur, 1981) a keen awareness of shared responsibility for those who will follow them and an obligation to "give back" to the community what they have learned from it. It was abundantly evident throughout the interviews that these teachers of color had been "reading the world" (Freire, 1991) of teaching and what others thought of it as an occupational choice long before as well as during the time they were entering classrooms. All cited as influential the voices and views of parents (their own, the children's), peers, professionals at different levels of schooling including the College

where they were now studying, as well as those of the children they had come to know. A few learned about teaching from parents who were themselves teachers or principals, who encouraged them to enter the profession because they themselves had - or had hoped to - become teachers.

Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez (1972) have proposed that individuals who are bicultural, whose daily life requires adjustment to the demands of more than one community, will by necessity develop heightened attentiveness to diverse and changing forces which affect their progress. The stories told by these teachers of color reveal this kind of astute assessment of more and less effective learning environments for children and themselves. They see and describe themselves, both as they are and are likely to become, in constant reciprocal interaction with others in their social and professional worlds. Consequently, a salient theme throughout the interviews is an emphasis on the social as well as personal meanings of their decision to teach.

Negative influences as deterrent?

Every teacher interviewed recalled some negative experiences with other professionals working in education, either before they entered the profession, afterward or both. One, for example, who claimed she had always wanted to teach, described how how she was "turned off by the attitude of ed majors" at her undergraduate school:

> - They seemed like they had easy jobs/Their fathers and uncles and everybody had principal positions/and they had jobs waiting for them/and they weren't serious about studying. One or two people would do the work and everybody else would copy the answers/that kind of attitude.

Another, planning to use teaching as a stepping stone to another role in the field, was discouraged by her contact with someone in that position:

> - And when I was working in the schools, I went to school in- a college in New Orleans and while you have to do readings in this class and go to this school for that, I saw a psychologist working within the school and I thought - I just could not believe that they, what their job was. To me they were doing absolutely nothing. I didn't see them helping a child But ah

anyway, to me she was just not my idea, you know, if I was going to take on a job, I expect I that I can change the world and she wasn't even changing, you know she isn't doing anything for me .

A third, one of three male teachers in this funded program, spoke of dismaying early experiences with older colleagues at an urban public school where he taught:

> - I went through a total progression /being in places and being really frustrated/hating the way teachers treated kids. It was so odd/they would sit in the teachers' lounge you would walk in the door and feel like you were slapped in the face! Cause everything was bad - every kid was bad - every classroom was bad - everything was bad. And I would say, 'Look, it's not!' But I would feel I couldn't even say that /I couldn't say things were going well in my class because nothing was going well anywhere.

Negative influences as incentive?

For this group of people of color, hearing negative comments about children from other professionals was dismaying but it tended to reinforce their dedication to teach. The young teacher who recalled being deterred from teaching by early encounters with 'ed majors,' decided to help make a difference for other people's children after a decade spent raising her own; the male teacher who'd been daunted by such hostility in the teachers' lounge developed the resources to challenge this negativity through his own work and powerful communication about its meaning. As is evident in the quotes below, negative exchanges with more experienced teachers can be pivotal in the determination to teach!

> - So I really debated that first month, saying 'What am I doing to myself here?' Is it worth it? But in terms of wanting it or not wanting it...the other factor was that there were a lot of teachers who would talk about how they were paid baby sitters and like/'don't bother giving them too much because these kids are not too smart to begin with.' And things like that.
>
> And I kind of felt/I came from a similar neighborhood/I came from a similar place/and I don't know whether these kids are smart or not smart because I don't have the tools to assess that yet. I mean my first education course and my first day of teaching were the same day! So I didn't come in feeling like I know how to assess somebody's intelligence or knowledge. But I felt like/whether the kids were very intelligent or not very intelligent I did not want them being given this attitude...'

Another reports:

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- I was asked to substitute for two weeks right after that first day in the kindergarten for a first grade class and this was a so-called 'bottom' first grade class and a teacher that was going away. She said things to me like "well you know, don't expect too much of them, they're animals" and ahm, "watch out for this one,she throws desks, watch out for that one," and you know, I was just shocked by that , I thought - "animals, what are you talking about, they are six!"

"Stronger in their presence"

Not surprisingly, for this group of students, remembered experiences with highly dedicated, competent and creative urban teachers and/or principals were seen as inspirational in the formation ot their professional identity. In every instance of this kind described in the interviews, some professional educator included <u>them</u> as well as children and families in the circle of those who matter, affirmed their talent for teaching, offered them new, collaborative, often unimagined opportunities for ongoing professional development. Consider the following exchanges and comments about what enables teachers to grow and persist through difficulty:

- When my principal mentioned (the College) to me and the scholarship, he mentioned it because he knows what kind of teacher I am. I'm not the traditional teacher. I'm for the most part pretty relaxed but I get my job done and the kids enjoy it. It's usually an experience in my room. So that he felt it would enrich the classroom even bett..

<u>Exchange #1</u>
- *Interviewer*: How do you maintain that faith despite your experiences with some of the uncaring educators you've described - people who say they're only in it to send their own kids to college or to earn the salary? How do you maintain the faith that what you're doing is going to make a difference?

Grad.Student: I don't associate with those kinds of teachers. One reason I stay at the school where I am is I feel I have a family there. There are a lot of good people - caring people, teachers that care, some of whom are teachers who grew up in that neighborhood and want to give back to that community, some of whom taught the grandparents of some of the children that are in their classes. There's a real sense of community and that fuels me!

<u>Exchange #2:</u>

- *Grad.Student:* I think it also has to do with leadership...I'm now in a different school/ and I know less people in this school but I see more evidence of teachers who really care for what they're doing. And I feel/like/ stronger in their presence. ....We have a principal who has forbidden raising your voice. And he walks around/and he's very positive/and he's...and I just see it all through the building.

Grad.Student: Makes a lot of difference/It really does. I had a child who was a troublesome child and one day he said, referring to the principal: 'You know, he really likes kids.' So it wasn't until a few days later that I got to tell the principal. And/you know/ that was/ like the biggest compliment he could get. I don't think there's a lot of principals in the public school system who really like kids. There's so many different agendas - political and otherwise/but that makes a big difference!

Another graduate student recalls:

- She saw my face, the principal saw my face, and said:'What is it? You have second thoughts?' You know, here is this little tiny woman, she's still wearing her coat, and she says, 'Come on. You'll like it. It's tough, the people are tough, you know. But they have a real concern about kids. And I think that you, you know, would be good for the kids, good for the school.'

As suggested above, professional peers and school leaders play pivotal roles in the way these teachers come to invest in and understand their own progress. They look to them for vision, for building reciprocal support networks, and for helping them sustain a commitment to teach against often difficult odds.

Teacher as Change Agent: "Things can change and things have to change"

These teachers of color express professional goals that include but extend beyond individual advancement, both theirs and that of the children they teach. They communicate concern about what precedes and follows what they do in their own classrooms. They assign high priority to improving the school and the public education system so that more children have a chance for a better future. To further these aims, they recognize and speak for collaboration and interdependence

Holding a transformative view of education, they want to go beyond the given, have an effect beyond what happens in a single classroom. Their own experience and concerns predispose them to find current arrangements "not good enough" for themselves and for children. These are teachers deeply concerned with children's lives outside as well as inside schools. Their vision of the present and the future involves participation in systemic efforts to achieve greater equity in schools and society.

> - I want to make a mark or leave an impression cause I'm always talking to them about surviving.They have to survive. They're in this concrete jungle. They play in a concrete jungle, they play in the street....my goal, my focus now is for the children/ because no one has addressed properly/ our children! You know, the language, everything. Their living! You know, their environment, where they come from

> - It's the children that have made a difference for me. And I know, going home all the time, and gathering stuff up, my children say, "Who's that for?" And I get so tired of saying "my class". I'm always speaking of them and always trying to make a difference for them. I'm trying to give that back to them.

> - I enjoy my job. I can tell you why it interests me. I like what I'm doing, I enjoy working with children and I think that I believe that things can change and things have to change like E___ said, if we want our words to become anything, cause right now, you look at the children, you think, our kids are not going to grow up? Someone has to be there to lead them and to guide them because their parents, unfortunately are not doing the job and there are a lot of educators who are not helping out either. And I just think that's my job, I just have to do that mark on these children. So that's why I'm there.

> - That feeling made me feel like there was some obligation to stay...when this crop of children goes on to the next grade, there's the next crop of kids...

The same informant describes later in the interview how this principal enlisted her in efforts to help other teachers improve their practice:

> My principal asked me last week after he saw my lesson how I thought about running a workshop. I told him about my past experiences (with workshops) and he said, 'Well, what about this?' Why don't I come in and videotape it? We'll show it in the teachers room and then they're gonna see how it works. They can use their personality/ adapt it anyway they'd like to/but I want them to see what's going on in your room. It'll put the pressure on those who are sending their kids to you/ that they'd better become a little more creative than those whom you'll be sending your children to. Because you can see the dynamics in those kids! If you take this group

of children - and then (later) they just fall flat, then what is it you're not doing?

This teacher's and principal's shared awareness of the systemic implications of good or poor teaching, as well as their negotiation over strategies for improvement, is especially striking. It illustrates how apprenticeship can be furthered so as to benefit many more children and their teachers.

As apparent in the data provided above, these teachers of color have different stories, various "funds of knowledge" (Moll and Greenberg 1988) to share with each other. For all of them, however, the notion of "give back" is fundamental and compelling. They express a sense of shared community membership with the children, with teachers they admire, and to a larger extent the communities and neighborhoods on their minds. For most of them, this means widening the circle of those who matter beyond their own earlier experiences. Although these teachers are not working in the particular neighborhoods where they grew up, they speak as members committed to the well-being of the broader urban community.

Overtly critical of most current educational practices, these teachers are angry about the impact and implications for children's lives. They do not view inequality and racism as inevitable despite what other colleagues may believe and tell them. They are realistic, however, about attitudes and other obstacles which stand in the way of beneficial change. The roles they define for themselves are thus framed in recognition of schooling as a sociopolitical institution. Instead of adapting to the cultural reproduction that exists, these teachers, as Gramsci (in Weiler, 1988) suggests, are conscious of their own power as human agents to resist the hidden agendas of the school hierarchy in highly sophisticated negotiation strategies (Willis, 1977; Giroux, 1983; Apple, 1982a; Wexler, 1985a). These teachers see the role domination has played in classrooms and in school relationships, in the way teachers come to view themselves as "undereducated" and"just a downtrodden group of people." But rather than confine their efforts to a single classroomthey are more

politically oriented and active in the larger change process, sharing curriculum with colleagues, planning broader learning environments for children, exchanging knowledge with others through workshops, staff development sessions and district-wide meetings.

> - *Grad. Student*: I went through a total progression/ hating the way teachers treated kids The biggest fight I ever had/major yelling at the top of my lungs.There was this teacher in my school...there was a class of kids who/I guess/most of them were Puerto Rican or Black and he said, one day, when they were really struggling with math: "well, you know, those kids...they can't learn math." I flew off the deep end/It just infuriated me. I don't know where that came from and afterwards/somehow I've been able to control it/but I won't let it slide...I just won't let it slide any more. Because I think what I'm doing is too important. So I think I've gotten a little more vocal with it.

> -*Grad. Student*: I'd like to stay and make a difference for the children but I'd like to go a bit further than that because I'm into this thing where I want to gain an amount of knowledge and I want to spread it. I'd like to tell my administrators about it because they are the ones that can change things and after like I tell them about it, maybe make an impact on them, so that it'll become a ripple effect and spread the word on to the teacher ed. I'm starting to see that now, because they're asking me to do workshops and share what I know and what I'm learning...

> - *Grad. Student*: We have to be examples for ourselves, for our parents, always stressing "be proud of yourself." Always motivating them, I don't care where you live, what you do, here we are proud people and always putting that in their mind.

Using what Works: Differentiated Choices

These teachers have been thinking hard, sifting through what they have learned and chosen to take from their own and others' histories (cf. Foucault, 1970, on mining the "archeology of knowledge") that will be most useful in their work and lives. Their words reflect awareness of the connection between how and what they've been taught and what they'll provide for children. There is considerable evidence that they view their needs, their futures and their students' as intertwined. Consider the following examples:

> - I went to school in the Bronx. Luckily, I had a mother who/they both had gone to first-year college in Puerto Rico/then they dropped out. But to her, education was paramount. But it wasn't to everybody and a lot of the kids in my neighborhood were very smart kids who kind of/because they didn't have a lot of support/never really made it through. It was just - somehow I made it through. But I think my parents/we were part of the

neighborhood/we were never anything other than being part of that neighborhood. Succeeding in school didn't put us aside from that neighborhood/we were still part of that neighborhood. And I remember so many times teachers talking about "these kids" and it was like so derogatory/it was always "these kids." And I remember I said, "That's what I want to do." I said, "I know why I'm at this school only a couple of more years. My thing is: I want to go back and I want to set up a school in the neighborhood where I grew up. Cause I know there are lots of kids who absolutely have the potential to do whatever they want to do. They're just not given the chance at all. ... I vowed to myself I'd learn as much as I could so that when I did it/it would be something I'd succeed in. It's not going to be fly-by-night kind of thing/and I feel like I'm really at that point now where I've got to learn as much as I can.

- I don't know, it's, I know last year it did not meet my expectations at all. It was really frustrating, really quite frustrating. But as a whole, yeah, new teaching is demanding. And I was just always trying to think of what I could do to make their [the children's] school lives just a little bit better.

- ...as demeaning as the profession is in the newspapers/when you look at the salary /I think that we're very important in that we have the potential to change the world/and change these little lives.

Like the teachers of color who participated in Delpit's (1988) study, these teachers value highly what they have learned in their communities of origin. They do not equate self-advancement with abandoning the community but rather acquiring the resources to "give back" some of what they have learned there and elsewhere. Attracted to the College in part because of its reputation for innovation, these are individuals who see themselves as creative, dedicated, and energetic. These interviews reveal that they came for graduate study to extend rather than replace what they know - and, of course, to obtain state certification. Well aware of their own resources and what they see as necessary for successful work with urban public school children, they are highly selective about what they have come to expect and take from their graduate education. They have learned to be vigilant about what different contexts require and offer. As one graduate student says:

- Anything you learn, you're going to assimilate it for however you feel you can use it in your classroom. You're gonna change it some way but hopefully you're going to take exactly what you need.

And consider this thoughtful, differentiated account:

- I was teaching in the public school. And working as a secretary in the office (her prior position) as opposed to being in the classroom was a whole different world. And what I thought was going to be awful about teaching wasn't that awful / and I found that coming to classes in the evenings - it was the first, ever portion of my education that I felt like an alcoholic going to an AA meeting. I'm going for my fix tonight! ((laughter)) Because there were a lot of things that were so pertinent/in terms of being able to /not necessarily bring them back, because the public school setting is /is/ it's probably very different /from school to school. But the general philosophy about children: You know, if you make it interesting, then they won't make time to think about throwing eggs at you! ((laughter)) And so/I started to feel really good about the fact that even though it was tough to teach, that Bank Street was doing something for me. It was giving me some real things to work with. I mean/I was constantly in the library photocopying things. You know, I wasn't putting together a resource file yet and when I saw that was one of the requirements for the class, I said, "Wow, what a good idea." I liked that and I felt I probably wouldn't have survived - and this is only my second year - and I wouldn't have survived that first year without having that kind of support. Had Bank Street been as my other education was/You know, they give you textbooks and chapters and things like that to read, I wouldn't have been able to stay with it! Cause...teaching is tough.

Another teacher of color has been seeking new opportunities in the field:

- And ah, I got into the D____ Program ... And I was getting kind of bored with it because though it was broadening my skills, it was the same skills and I wanted to build on something else, so I went into the Math Leadership Program and I love the Math Leadership program! It really opened up a lot of possibilities of where I could go from here, and its just kind of inspirational, like I'm more excited and I can put that into my classroom activities .

More problematic, these teachers tell us, is the discrepancy they note between the College's impressive philosophy and programs - and the pressure toward assimilation they often experience as graduate students at an institution with a well-defined mission. Several report a sense of marginality: i.e. lack of interest in their ideas, discomfort in sharing professional realities so divergent from what other students experience. They comment on widely-held assumptions here that what the College offers is "best" and that no other approach deserves extensive consideration. One teacher of color stated, echoing Delpit, "That makes you wonder what 'progressive' really means." The following exchange between two teachers in the study further illustrates this concern:

- *Grad.Student #1:* In September/the first semester of last year/I felt kind of crazy because I came out of schools that were all like/minority was the majority. When I came to Bank Street I said, "Wow!" I felt a little strange about it and said "Don't freak out" because it's your first experience in a school where you and people that your background is similar with are not the majority. And/I went through the year but I found I was losing my voice/I wouldn't speak so easily in class. And I'm a talker and I'm opinionated and I

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wasn't speaking in class. And maybe/((to __)) some of it is what you're saying - when people would talk about doing assistant work/I'd think: "They're doing this a whole year and not receiving any money!" So they could learn to teach? It's a whole other world for me/I couldn't even think of doing that. So that/things that were so different/they were causing me to lose my voice. My concerns: that a child's mother didn't send him to school for a week and when we went to the home/we made a deal with the child to come to school - with a six year old - because the mother wasn't around or able to/I felt like when there was a point to introduce that into the conversation, I was like, "Am I betraying that child?" by presenting that story to people-

Grad. Student #2: - from a totally different... Yeah/I've gotten that kind of/like in my advisement group. We have a few public school teachers and teachers from Scarsdale and places in New Jersey where I've never been to. ((laughter)) You said ((to ___))you lose your voice. For me, now, if I'm the only dark person in my class, I feel it's more important for me to speak cause I'm representing everybody! So I have to say something. When they get on certain subjects/I sit back and I listen for awhile. And then I speak and I speak - in a sense/I feel I'm some sort of ambassador or representative-

Conclusion

What kinds of implications can be drawn from this study for improving teacher education? Based on our analysis of the data collected via group interviews with teachers of color, we offer the following:

1. If we are to make continued progress in efforts to educate all our children, we need to recognize and learn from a notion of "communitas" (MacIntyre, 1984) so deeply embedded in these stories that it seems to be taken for granted. Moving beyond a goal of education that focuses solely on individual achievement, these teachers of color both express and exemplify commitment to education that serves broader social as well as personal aims.

2. Wentworth's (1980) notion of "socialization-as-interaction" underscores the importance of hearing and heeding the voices of new members, discovering what is different as well as familiar in the expectations, resources and needs they bring with them. We strengthen our profession by learning what it means to new members and by recognizing the distinctive contributions they have to offer.

3. Hearing from teachers who view themselves as change agents and advocates for social justice forefronts what is at stake for our children and our society. Are we doing enough as teacher educators to prepare all teachers to address factors (social, economic,

political) that impinge on classroom practice? Are we doing enough to empower them to investigate and respond to what facilitates and constrains systemic change?

A salient theme of this study is the dedication of these teachers of color to enlarge the circle of those who matter to them, beyond their immediate families, beyond the challenges of a single classroom or school or neighborhood. Their words reveal an ongoing concern with the questions: "Who counts?" and "What can I do about it?" They also reveal how they are learning from as well as teaching the next generation. Instead of working from any set of pre-determined beliefs and practices, they begin with the children and then draw on all appropriate resources to meet their needs. For all who believe that educational theory and practice should be mutually informing, the entry of more teachers of color into the profession has much to teach us. In the words of German Mariño, a Colombian scholar and community educator, the challenge we share with them now on behalf of children is to construct and sustain a more inclusive "dialogue of knowers."

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